

Louisiana Public Alerts, Warnings, and Notifications Plan



January 2023

Distribution is limited to those entities authorized by Louisiana Governor's Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security.

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LOUISIANA PUBLIC ALERTS, WARNINGS, AND NOTIFICATIONS PLAN JANUARY 2023

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Document Revision Process

The Louisiana Alerts, Warnings and Notifications guidelines are reviewed at a minimum every two years. The Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC) is responsible for conducting the review. Time critical updates may be initiated at any time and submitted using this same process. Any updates or changes to this document will be submitted to the SWIC for approval prior to implementation.

Once approved, all changes to the document are recorded in the Revision Record below.

Revision Record

VERSION	DATE	DESCRIPTION OF CHANGE



LOUISIANA PUBLIC ALERTS, WARNINGS, AND NOTIFICATIONS PLAN
JANUARY 2023

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Purpose

This policy document and included standard operating procedures (SOPs) provide procedural guidance for the use of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) and the processes and procedures for issuing alerts, warnings, and notifications in the State of Louisiana. These procedures are designed to help ensure that the citizens and visitors of Louisiana receive timely and accurate notifications of life-threatening situations. The State of Louisiana has an IPAWS administrator who establishes which codes Alerting Authorities are permitted to use, approves Collaborative Operating Groups (COGs) for certification, and approves testing procedures and events for Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) broadcast testing.

Each COG/agency approved by the State IPAWS Administrator is an Alerting Authority authorized to use the IPAWS platform for emergency notifications.

This document mentions Emergency Alerting System (EAS) processes; however the official Louisiana EAS Plan is a separate document created by a state working group and approved by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Further explanation is contained in this document.

Public Alert/Watch, Warnings, and Notifications/Advisories Definitions

Public Alert/Watch

A public alert/watch is a communication intended to attract public attention with instruction for potential protective actions. It may also provide ongoing communications relevant to an event and encourage public preparation and increase individual awareness. The measure of an effective alert/watch message is the extent to which the intended audience becomes attentive and searches for additional information.

Public Warning

A public warning is a communication to compel the public to take immediate protective actions to reduce losses or harm to life and seeks to eliminate milling. The measure of an effective public warning message is the extent to which the intended audience receives the message and takes the prescribed protective action. For the purposes of this document, the IPAWS concept of an "imminent threat" is synonymous with public warning.

Notifications/Advisories

Notifications/advisories include public and internal notifications. These notifications/advisories are not to be used for promoting public or private events.

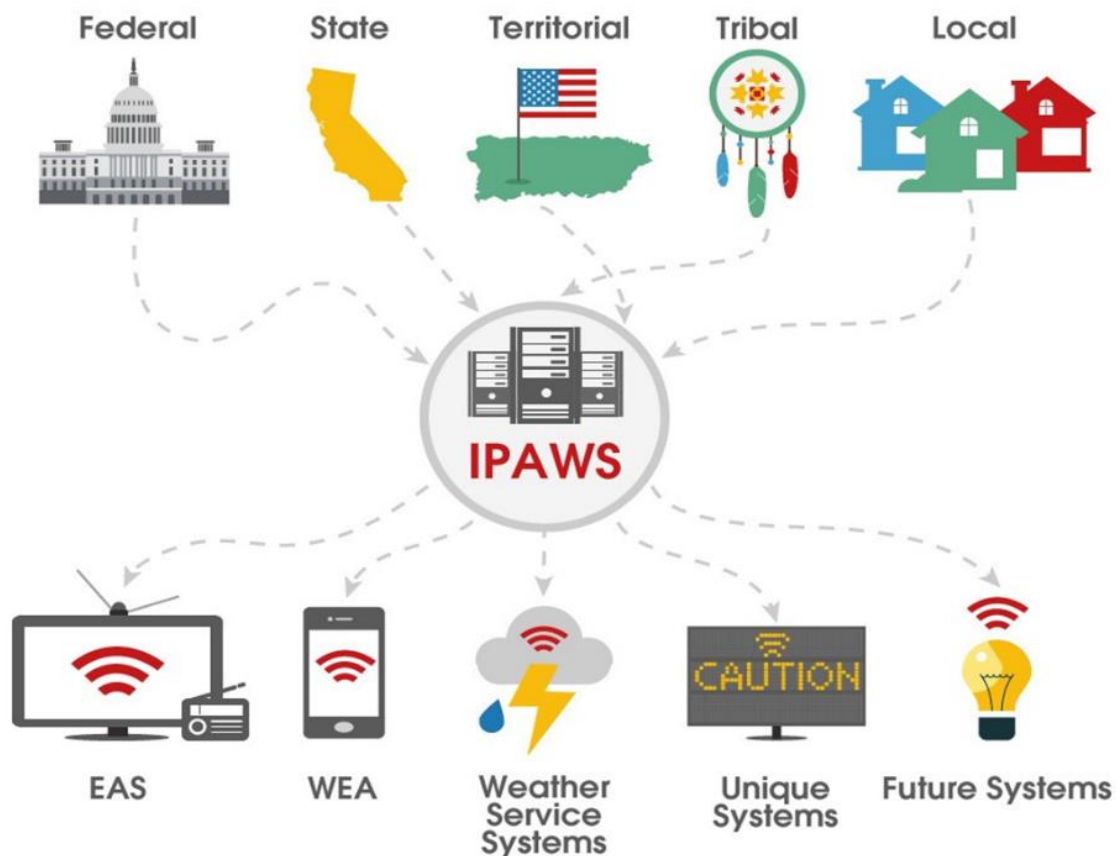
- Public notifications/advisories can include protective actions, evacuation routes, boil water advisories, traffic advisories and return from evacuation notices.



- Internal notifications/advisories provide communications and information as defined by the agency.

Roles and Responsibilities

Planning for, preparing, and disseminating alerts and warnings is the responsibility of multiple levels of government. Each level of government, and designated entities within those levels, hold responsibility and/or authority to ensure the overall effectiveness of the statewide alert and warning system in the State of Louisiana.



Local government organizations and officials have a responsibility to keep the public informed about natural, human-caused, and technological disasters, and to provide guidance regarding what actions they need to take to protect themselves and their families. Organization of local area alert and warning systems varies, but may be inclusive of city, special district, parish, and multi-parish jurisdictions.

Local government officials typically have the most accurate and timely understanding of an emergency including necessary protective actions and potential adverse impacts. Local officials are urged to communicate with the public rapidly and adequately what is occurring and any steps or actions the public needs to take.



These actions can include but are not limited to:

- Evacuation orders including evacuation routes, shelter info, key information, etc.
- Locations of points of distribution for food, water, medicine, etc.
- Direction to move to higher ground
- Hazardous materials incidents
- Red Flag fire warnings
- Weather alerts
- Lockdown
- Shelter-in-place guidance

The above scenarios may trigger the state or local jurisdictions to send out an alert via one or more of their alerting tools.

The Louisiana Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness

Recognizing that all disasters are local, the primary responsibility of the State is to facilitate the implementation of IPAWS and other emergency notifications into the emergency notification network. In the case of a catastrophic local, state, or regionally defined event, the State provides a resilient and comprehensive alert and notification capability. Each participating parish, city or Tribal Nation will designate the COG point of contact as per the signed Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with FEMA.

The Louisiana Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP) is the alternate agency to provide IPAWS warnings and alerts on behalf of parish agencies. GOHSEP coordinates a working group comprised of applicable statewide stakeholders to bring together the necessary technical and operational expertise from the private sector, non-profit organizations, local jurisdictions, state, tribal entities, and the federal government with the goal of defining guidelines and procedures leading to the implementation of IPAWS across the state. The working group should be comprised of, but not limited to, the following agencies:

- GOHSEP
- Louisiana Association of Broadcasters (LAB)
- NWS local weather forecast office
- Representatives from commercial telecommunications providers
- Representatives from local emergency management offices

The State IPAWS Administrator reviews and approves applications for COGs for all local and State Agencies.

GOHSEP conducts monthly tests of the IPAWS system to ensure functionality of



equipment and the network as required by FEMA. For parishes that are not IPAWS approved, GOHSEP provides WEA at their request. GOHSEP also provides a backup capability for local alerting authorities to issue emergency broadcasts on behalf of the local jurisdiction.

GOHSEP currently utilizes Rave Mobile Safety for all IPAWS and other emergency alerting. Rave is a subscription web-based notification tool used by numerous emergency management agencies throughout the country. Rave can be accessed utilizing any internet source including but not limited to local fiber, broadband or satellite service. GOHSEP also has redundant capabilities pre-planned for alerting.

Local Jurisdictions

Specifically, local jurisdictions are responsible for:

- Enacting ordinances and/or policies identifying local roles and responsibilities to enable the issuance and coordinated dissemination of alerts and warnings to the public by responsible officials within their jurisdictions regarding imminent threats to human life and health and extraordinary threats to property
- Installing, maintaining, training users, and exercising/testing of local public alert and warning capabilities within their jurisdiction
- Understanding the access and functional needs-related considerations associated with public alert and warning systems and messaging
- Obtaining authority and tools for accessing federal warning systems as a COG via IPAWS
- Participating in revisions of mandated FCC local EAS plans, including approval of authorized event codes
- Developing procedures for the proper chain of command for initiating, cancelling, and revoking accidental alerts, and for rapidly correcting and updating alert details as additional information becomes available
- Coordinating with adjoining jurisdictions, Operational Areas, the State, and the National Weather Service (NWS) regarding origination of alerts and warnings over NWS Weather Radio related to hazards that have effects across jurisdictional boundaries
- Participating in required monthly proficiency IPAWS tests as directed by the FEMA IPAWS office

All disasters and emergencies are local. While first responders are preparing to respond an incident, it is an inherent responsibility of local officials to keep the public informed of what actions they need to take to protect themselves. Communicating these instructions to the public is the primary purpose of IPAWS. Because local officials have a better understanding of the situation, the immediate actions that are being taken, and potential adverse impacts of the incident, it is incumbent upon these locals to communicate to the public rapidly and effectively what is going on and what needs to be done to potentially



save the citizen's life.

To successfully accomplish this task, local jurisdictions must have a structure in place to provide for rapid alerts and warnings. Many of the tasks leading to this structure will include:

- Submit to the State a request/plan that identifies emergency notification providers/systems for inclusion into the IPAWS network.
- Designate in writing, in accordance with the FEMA application process, no fewer than three individuals who will be the jurisdiction's alerting authorities for issuing emergency alerts with IPAWS following their successful completion of IS-247.b "Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) for Alert Originators" course. Typically, this would be the jurisdiction's emergency manager, staff and/or PSAP staff.
- Incorporating IPAWS into existing and future response plans and procedures as well as training and exercise events.

Each established COG maintains a list of all individuals who have successfully completed IPAWS IS-247.b (as amended) course and other required courses as directed by federal and state guidance. This list contains copies of completed course certificates, individual names/contact information, and copies of memorandum/resolutions officially designating these individuals as public alerting authorities (PAAs).

COG-level permissions are detailed in the application for IPAWS PAA and describe the geographic boundaries for alerting, the types of alerts that can be issued, the alert approval process and the dissemination systems that can be used to distribute such alerts. COG-level permissions help to define the area of responsibility and the capabilities the alerting authority has.

Only one (1) PAA will be authorized per parish, city, and federally recognized Tribal Nation. Consideration will be given to include military installations on a case-by-case basis. This consideration will be given in coordination with local emergency management personnel.

Tribal

Tribal elected officials may designate which public safety officials in their Tribe are granted the authority to alert the public of emergency situations occurring that can effect Tribal members. These officials are responsible for informing their members about natural and human-caused disasters, and what actions they need to take to protect themselves and their families. Some of these actions could include, but are not limited to:

- Evacuation orders
- Locations of points of distribution for food, water, medicine, etc.
- Direction to move to higher ground



- Shelter-in-place guidance

Tribal governments that choose to access federal warning systems via IPAWS may be responsible for:

- Installation, maintenance, user training and exercise/testing of local public alert and warning capabilities within their jurisdiction
- Ordinances and/or policies enabling the issuance and effective dissemination of alerts and warnings to their jurisdictions regarding imminent threats to human life and health and extraordinary threats to property
- Understanding the access and functional needs-related considerations associated with public alert and warning systems and messaging
- Developing policies and procedures for cancelling and revoking accidental alerts, and for rapidly correcting and updating alert details as additional information becomes available
- Coordination with adjoining jurisdictions, Operational Areas, and the State regarding origination of alerts and warnings related to hazards that have effects across jurisdictional boundaries

National Weather Service

The NWS is responsible for originating public warnings regarding weather hazards. The NWS operates several public alert and warning dissemination systems, including NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards (NWR), a network of over 1,000 Very High Frequency (VHF) radio transmitters, NOAA Weather Wire Service (NWWS), and the Emergency Managers Weather Information Network (EMWIN). While the NWS is responsible for weather related alerting, local government is not precluded from sending notifications and alerts in support of weather events.

NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards

NWR is an all-hazards radio network, making it a single source for comprehensive weather and emergency information. In conjunction with federal, state, and local emergency managers and other public officials, NWR also broadcasts/conveys warning and post-event information for many types of non-weather hazards including natural incidents, such as earthquakes or avalanches, environmental incidents, such as chemical releases or oil spills, and public safety incidents, such as civil emergency messages or 9-1-1 telephone outages. Federal, state and local officials may request directly to the NWS to broadcast of other types of hazards.

NWS and EAS

The FCC, in conjunction with FEMA and NOAA NWS, implements EAS at the federal level. The NWS develops emergency weather information to alert the public about imminent and dangerous weather conditions.



The NWS requests activation of EAS for imminent and dangerous weather conditions, uses NWR as its primary means to activate EAS, and NWS can assist with relaying state and local authorities' non-weather EAS messages and activations via NWR to communicate important non-weather emergency messages, such as 9-1-1 outages, shelter-in-place, and Civil Emergency Messages.

Except for national-level activation of the EAS, it is voluntary for EAS participants, such as radio and television stations, to further relay NWS-generated messages. NWS EAS codes can be found here: <https://www.weather.gov/NWR/eventcodes>.

Naming Convention for EAS Event Codes

The FCC established naming conventions for EAS event codes. In most cases, and for all future codes to be approved, the third letter of all hazardous state and local event codes is limited to one of four letters: W for Warnings, A for Watches, E for Emergencies, and S for Statements.

Warnings

A warning is an event that alone poses a significant threat to public safety and/or property, probability of occurrence and location is high, and the onset time is relatively short.

Watches

A watch meets the classification of a warning, but either the onset time, probability of occurrence, or location is uncertain.

Emergencies

An emergency is an event that, by itself, would not kill or injure or do property damage, but indirectly may cause other things to happen that result in a hazard. For example, a major power or telephone loss in a large city alone is not a direct hazard, but disruption to other critical services could create a variety of conditions that could directly threaten public safety.

Statements

A statement is a message containing follow up information to a warning, watch, or emergency.

NWS and WEA

The NWS coordinates with its local partners prior to issuing WEA messages for continuity of operations and effective response. The NWS in conjunction with the FCC has an established list of weather warnings that triggers WEA for the affected area, defined as a polygon. WEA messages are disseminated via IPAWS. The approved NWS warnings that will initiate a WEA are:

- Flash Flood (FFW) – including, due to dam inundation and debris flows
- Tornado (TOR)
- Tornado Emergency (TOE)



- Blizzard Warning
- Hurricane Warning
- Tsunami Warning (not applicable)
- Typhoon Warning (not applicable)
- Ice Storm Warning
- Dust Storm Warning
- Extreme Wind (EWW)

Technologies

IPAWS

IPAWS is an internet-based capability, run by FEMA, which federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial authorities can use to issue critical public alerts and warnings. The three core components of IPAWS are EAS, WEA, and the NOAA NWR. IPAWS also includes capabilities for unique alert systems, which includes dissemination of alerts through third party applications, and future system development.

Each approved PAA can issue IPAWS alerts by use of agency purchased, FEMA approved software. Each PAA is assigned one Federal Information Processing Standards (FIPS) code, for Non-Weather Emergency Messages (NWEM) and EAS activations. The alert is disseminated to the entire parish, or an area selected using IPAWS compatible software. IPAWS is a “system of systems” that can use additional alerting dissemination methods and technologies.

Any assistance for IPAWS message issuance should be processed through IPAWS Technical Support Services Facility or call, toll-free, 1-84-IPAWSLAB or 1-844-729-7522 24 hours a day, 7 days per week, including holidays.

EAS

The EAS alerts through broadcast radio and television stations in their respective coverage areas. EAS enables the President to interrupt all broadcasts in one or more parishes with an emergency announcement. Participation in local use of EAS is voluntary on the part of broadcasters. EAS messages are delivered to all listeners or viewers of stations serving a targeted parish. Satellite and cable TV carriers also participate in EAS, but their capacity to geographically target dissemination is more limited. EAS can distribute warning messages over large areas very quickly but cannot reach people who are not watching or listening to broadcast media, particularly people who are asleep.

Please note that due to plans and agreements between broadcasters and GOHSEP, local agencies in Louisiana are not allowed to initiate and send EAS messages through IPAWS.



Further information regarding EAS issuance can be found in the Louisiana EAS Plan.

WEA

WEA are emergency messages sent by authorized government Alerting Authorities through mobile carriers. They broadcast a text alert to all WEA capable cell phones within the designated alerting area. WEA messages are limited to 360 characters. WEA alerts are targeted to a defined geographical area and are presented differently than a typical text alert in order to differentiate them from regular notifications. They offer a unique alert tone and vibration accompanied by a brief push notification displayed on the end user's mobile device. Mobile device users will receive the WEA notification unless they choose to deactivate the service on their mobile device. The targeted area may not completely match a polygon or selected area selected through the alerting software mapping interface.

Telephonic Alert Systems

Many localities can call telephone numbers in an organizational database and play an audio message. These systems draw from the publicly accessible "white" and "yellow" pages. Such systems can be highly effective when notifying a known list of recipients, such as the members of a team, organization, or student body. The possibility of precise geographic targeting of messages has made such systems extremely popular.

Telephonic notification systems can provide extensive warning information. The amount of time to execute all of the calls, however, can be limited by the local telephone infrastructure, length of the verbal message, or limits on the technology initiating the calls. Additionally, while landlines may be automatically opted-into such databases, Voice Over Internet Protocol (VoIP) and cell-based phone lines are not.

Social Media

Social media is now a critical component for disseminating emergency messaging, instructions, and recovery information to both the media and the public. Due to its unique nature, it functions instantaneously and creates the appearance of highly official two-way dialogue between the agency and large groups of people, including news media and stakeholders. Messaging for social media must be very carefully managed. It has the capability to deliver text, audio, video, images, infographics, maps, and other data and requires a skill set of regular use. These platforms have inherent expectations for two-way engagement and therefore demand more staff time and resources.

Social media is more successful when the community is engaged and aware of accounts prior to a disaster. Social platforms may include:

- Social networking
- Image sharing and messaging
- Video sharing
- Social blogging



- Social community

Considerations for incorporating social media into alerts and warnings before, during, and after emergencies include:

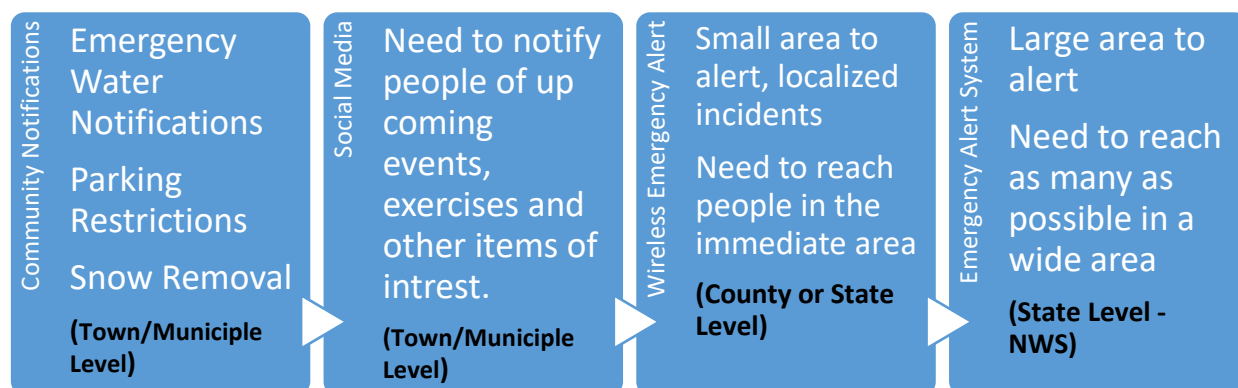
- Social media outreach is highly dependent on working cellular and data networks that may be impaired or down during and following an emergency.
- Consider the variety of languages and the complexity of language to use in postings.
- Social media is highly effective at reaching the news media, which may assist in more broadly sharing messaging.
- Briefings and updates via live and recorded video are recommended when internet access and bandwidth allow.
- Allow public comments to be posted and seen; two-way engagement is expected by the public and dedicated staff resources are necessary to facilitate it.
- Be aware that social media usage varies widely among different social, economic, and demographic groups. Information gleaned from social media analysis may not reflect a balanced or complete picture.
- Ensure messaging is consistent across all alerting platforms.
- Ensure that there is a process in place to address reports of emergencies (imminent threats to health and welfare, reports of citizens trapped or injured and third-party reports of people in danger or a prolonged period of non-contact) to all the previously mentioned social media platforms.

The GOHSEP social media page is monitored and managed by the GOHSEP Public Information Manager (PIM), and posts need pre-approval by the PIM or their designee prior to dissemination.

Community Alerts

Many agencies have multiple notification/alerting systems that can deliver both emergency and non-emergency information to their communities. These systems include but are not limited to opt-in parish notification methods, social media, and local radio and TV station messaging. Careful consideration should be taken to ensure that non-emergency information is not sent via IPAWS (WEA). Additionally, sending emergency messages over multiple systems is more effective than sending them over a single system.

When sending a community message, specify what the message type is (e.g., parking restriction notifications, road closures other community information) and consider the message delivery methods available. See the chart below to assist with making the determination level.



Policy for Issuing Public Alerts, Warnings, and Notifications

Events/incidents can evolve in unique ways. Alerts, warnings, and notifications are an integral component of a jurisdiction's preparation for such events. Issuing public alerts, warnings, and notifications requires the exercise of reasonable and well-informed judgment. This action must be well practiced and familiar to the initiator when incidents arise.

There is no all-encompassing formula for making messaging decisions. There are, however, some evidence-based principles and best practices that can guide the decision maker:

- Utilization of alerting mechanisms within IPAWS should be a primary method to issue alert and warnings to ensure the greatest number of recipients within the impacted area are being alerted.
- The responsibility for issuing alerts and warnings during an emergency rests with PAAs at the parish/state/tribal level. It is the choice of the PAA to determine who authorizes the issuance of alerts and/or warnings. It differs PAA to PAA. Provisions will be made on a case-by-case basis for military installations and university campuses who have limited geographical areas. Parish Emergency Management Agencies are the primary alerting authority for their jurisdictions.
- Messages must clearly identify the originating agency.

Training

Any member of a PAA whose duties include disseminating public alerts, warnings and notifications must complete all required FEMA Independent Studies course(s) at the time of renewal. Each PAA is responsible for ensuring and documenting that their designated users are properly trained, and all certifications are current.

To ensure effective and efficient use of alert and warning capabilities, agencies must regularly train and exercise their alert and warning policies, procedures, and systems.



To facilitate the annual training requirement, GOHSEP coordinates training with local alert originators.

Testing

Required Monthly EAS Tests (RMTs) are tests initiated by GOHSEP in cooperation with the LA Broadcasters and go through the Primary Entry Point (PEP) Station (WWL/AM), and Local Public Service Answering Points (PSAPs) on a rotating basis. The test is performed on specific days and times established by the Louisiana Association of Broadcasters. These tests go to and are forwarded through broadcasters ENDEC machines and appear on television and radio. Visit <https://broadcasters.org/eas/> for continuously updated testing information.

In accordance with FEMA guidance, all PAAs are required to perform a monthly test alert to the IPAWS Message Lab testing platform. PAAs can perform this test by using an issued COG test ID issued by FEMA. This allows PAAs to send an actual WEA message, with real alerting codes, in a safe testing environment. Extensive documentation is available from the State IPAWS Administrator to include IPAWS Message Viewer Instructions and Testing with the IPAWS Lab Checklist at <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/practitioners/integrated-public-alert-warning-system>.

Each PAA must have a monthly testing plan to ensure operational readiness. PAAs should conduct regular training and exercises, including tests, of all components of the alerts, warnings, notification program to ensure the ability to send emergency notification information across the entire program. Any impediments should be identified and a resolution at the lowest jurisdictional level possible should be developed.

Importation considerations are:

- Live messages sent to the production environment will not be considered for Monthly Proficiency Demonstration scoring.
- If a COG misses a single Monthly Proficiency Demo, they will receive a reminder from FEMA.
- If a COG misses two consecutive Monthly Proficiency Demos both they and their state IPAWS Reviewing Authority will be notified.
- If a COG misses three consecutive Monthly Proficiency Demos, they will lose access to the IPAWS Live Production Environment and not be able to use IPAWS for public alerting until such a time as they complete a successful Monthly Proficiency Demo.
- If a COG does not reinitiate proficiency testing, they will be removed from the IPAWS program and ineligible for MOA renewal until deficiencies are corrected and personnel retrained.

Jurisdictions should assess every component of their alert and warning program and identify the appropriate testing cycles for each piece. Systems that are used frequently



(at least monthly) may not require system testing frequencies as aggressive as those that are used less frequently.

It is important to understand testing limitations. For example, it is not allowable to test on unlisted or 9-1-1-database phone numbers.

Establishing Internal Policies and Operating Procedures

GOHSEP recommends local jurisdictions establish SOPs for alerting that comply with rules of behavior and your jurisdiction's alerting objectives. SOPs should take into consideration:

- Types of alerts you will issue
- Criteria for issuing an alert
- Notification and approval process
- Training for staff who will issue alerts
- Identification of back up alert originators both inside and outside of your jurisdiction who have access to the system and can originate alerts if primary is not available
- Coordination with other agencies in your jurisdiction
- Security procedures
- Testing of the system

SOPs for sending/cancellation of messages should include:

- Alerting roles and responsibilities
- Guidelines for when to send
- Procedural checklists
- Neighboring jurisdiction coordination plan
- Sharing information with the public on types of alerts and systems

Acceptable Use

Alert Activation

Each PAA should identify a plan for issuing alerts in their jurisdiction/area of responsibility and establish an alternate plan for issuing alerts and warnings should the primary method become inoperable or unavailable.

IPAWS Activation

The State IPAWS Administrator establishes what alerting codes authorities are authorized to use. The State IPAWS Administrator allows for the use of the following IPAWS alert codes and one testing code. Acceptable use of IPAWS alerts is identified below.



Child Abduction Emergency (State Police Use Only)

A Child Abduction Emergency (CAE) is an emergency message, based on established criteria, about a missing child believed to have been abducted. Note, the agency/organization establishing the criteria varies by jurisdiction, but most criteria loosely follow those of the Department of Justice (DOJ) and National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC). The law enforcement agency investigating the abduction will describe the missing child, provide a description of the suspect and/or vehicle, and ask the public to notify the requesting agency, or dial 9-1-1, if they have any information on the whereabouts of the child or suspect. The Louisiana State Police, GOHSEP, and the NCMEC are the only alerting authorities for these messages. Parishes should coordinate with them for issuance.

Civil Emergency Message

A Civil Emergency Message (CEM) an emergency message regarding an in-progress or imminent significant threat(s) to public safety and/or property. The CEM is a higher priority message than the Local Area Emergency (LAE), but the hazard is less specific than the Civil Danger Warning (CDW).

Evacuation Immediate

An Evacuation Immediate (EVI) is a warning where immediate evacuation is recommended or ordered according to state law or local ordinance. As an example, authorized officials may recommend the evacuation of affected areas due to an approaching tropical cyclone. In the event a flammable or explosive gas is released, authorized officials may recommend evacuation of designated areas where casualties or property damage from a vapor cloud explosion or fire may occur.

Local Area Emergency

A Local Area Emergency (LAE) is an emergency message that defines an event that, by itself, does not pose a significant threat to public safety and/or property. However, the event could escalate, contribute to other more serious events, or disrupt critical public safety services. Instructions, other than public protective actions, may be provided by authorized officials. Examples include a disruption in water, electric or natural gas service, a significant interruption in a transportation artery or a potential terrorist threat where the public is asked to remain alert.

Shelter in Place Warning

A Shelter in Place Warning (SPW) is a warning of an event where the public is recommended to shelter in place (i.e., go inside, close doors and windows, turn off air conditioning or heating systems, and turn on the radio or TV for more information). Examples include the release of hazardous materials where toxic fumes or radioactivity may affect designated areas.

Required Weekly Test/Required Monthly Test (EAS Only)

The "required" weekly test (RWT)/"required" monthly test (RMT) is not a requirement for Public Safety organizations as it is for our broadcast and cable partners. Required



weekly tests are used to verify EAS activation in the same manner silent testing (air) tests are performed on outdoor warning sirens. The local Alerting Authority should contact broadcasters in their area to determine the effectiveness of the test. This test will not be facilitated from local PAAs.

Event Activation

Other events that occur within Louisiana may require activation of EAS and/or IPAWS. These events may be identified in other emergency operations plans. Actions that are to be taken and messages that are to be sent should be identified in the emergency operations plan that calls for emergency messaging. The plans that include emergency messaging actions include but may not be limited to:

- Louisiana Peacetime Radiological Response Plan (LPRRP)

Delivery of Messages to Populations with Additional Communications Needs and Non-English-Speaking Individuals

To the extent possible, warning messages should be distributed to all members of the community who are at risk, including commuters, travelers or transient populations, people with disabilities or access and functional needs, non-English speakers, people in remote or isolated areas, the elderly, and people with limited technology. Additionally, when providing emergency alerts and notifications, it is vital to note that local, state, and federal governments are keenly aware that not everyone receives or processes information in the same manner.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires jurisdictions make all information accessible to their constituents, including emergency alerts and warnings. As such, governments must account for the access and functional related needs specific to alerts and warnings that impact all individuals, including those who are deaf or hard of hearing, blind or low vision, non-English speaking, persons with intellectual or developmental disabilities, or any others who receive and/or process information in alternate ways. Emergency alerts and warnings should account for the wide array of communication needs found in the public.

Alerting Authorities should seek resources such as the Department of Human Services or other like agencies to explore opportunities to deliver messages to everyone who needs them, including through non-conventional methods.

Alert Decision Making

Criteria for Issuing WEA Messages

When circumstances arise and there is a need for a public warning, the decision to send a message is ultimately a matter of local objective judgment. To assist in the decision-making process the following criteria may be applied:



- Does the hazardous situation require the public to take immediate action?
- Does the hazardous situation pose a serious threat to life or property?
- Is there a high degree of probability the hazardous situation will occur or escalate?

If you answered yes to all the questions above, and the decision is made to issue an alert, the following should be included in the message: Please note that based on IPAWS version status, the Alerting Authority may be limited to 90 characters. All alerts should include a 90- and 360-character message.

Consider the following:

- **Source**
 - Who is issuing the warning?
- **Hazard**
 - What is/are the hazards that are threatening?
 - What are the potential risks?
 - When should people act?
- **Location**
 - Where will the impacts occur?
 - Is the location described so those without local knowledge will understand their risk? (Use known streets, landmarks, terms, etc. do not use coordinates).
- **Guidance**
 - Protective Actions: What protective measures should people take and when?
 - If evacuation is called for, where should people go and what should they take with them.
 - How long will the impact last?
- **Time/Termination**
 - Expiration of warning

GOHSEP follows best practices and ensures all messages are reviewed by at least one person other than the individual that created it prior to sending the message. This review includes reviewing grammar and message settings. Local jurisdictions are encouraged to follow the same procedure.



System Use Not Permitted

Alerts, warnings, and notifications are employed as a mass notification communications system (MNS) to provide the community with timely notification of emergency events that may present an immediate threat and for communication with citizens regarding nonemergency information.

Emergency Notification Usage

Emergency use refers to a life or serious property-threatening event or condition. GOHSEP and/or local agencies may issue emergency notifications for life- or serious property-threatening events or conditions based on the observations of its staff, or at the request of other public safety agencies.

Non-Emergency Information Usage

Non-emergency use refers to community outreach and public information dissemination.

Non-emergency notifications should be used carefully, with the understanding that numerous messages will dilute the effectiveness of emergency notifications and can erode confidence in the system.

Non-emergency notifications may be transmitted using the MNS, preferably using community engagement features (i.e., keywords), with the approval of the chief executive or a department head of a political jurisdiction, or by elected officials. All non-emergency notifications must be compliant with all laws, local ordinances, regulations, and rules established by the State of Louisiana or local jurisdictions.

Prohibited non-emergency notifications include:

- Any message of a commercial nature
- Any message of a political nature
- Any non-official business
- The use of any individual's name not related to a public safety condition or event
- Each organization shall establish a default telephone number that is unique to that jurisdiction (e.g., city, fire district, etc.) that is visible to recipients

Cross-Border / Neighboring Jurisdiction Notification

Alerting Coordination

Alerting for another jurisdiction is accomplished by having an agreement in place with the other jurisdiction on:

- Who, what, and when alerting will take place
- Establishing agreed upon alerting criteria
- Establishing procedures for alerting



Update the Public Alerting Authority document with FEMA IPAWS to include the other jurisdiction and notify vendors of the change so they can update the software and allow alerts for the additional geographical area.

Erroneous or False Alert Procedures

Structured training and practice reduces false alarms. False alerts are damaging to the credibility of both the source agency and the method used. False alerts or erroneously issued warnings can cause the public to question the accuracy of future messages.

In the event that an erroneous, false, or misleading message is sent, the public in the alerted area should be notified immediately, and any protective measures recommended should be disregarded. PAAs should have procedures in place for such an event. In the case of an erroneous alert or warning, it is recommended that the issuing agency head be immediately notified. Likewise, the GOHSEP SWIC should be notified for situational awareness.

It is required that the FCC 24-Hour Center be notified that a false WEA or EAS alert has been sent within 24 hours of such message being sent. The notification can be sent to the FCC Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau (PSHSB) 24/7 Operations Center: at FCCOPCenter@fcc.gov or (202) 418-1122.

System Management

Each agency having a IPAWS MOA with FEMA, and which is an approved COG, is assigned a COG Identification (ID) and the Federal Information Processing Standard (FIPS) county code. There are two keys for IPAWS, the first being a training key and the other the live key.

- The training key will allow a user to sign-in to IPAWS through IPAWS capable software but will not send an IPAWS alert.
- The live key is used when conducting tests of IPAWS or for an actual IPAWS alert. The live key should never be used for training.

Upon the separation of an employee who had access to the training key or live key, or when the password is suspected or known to have been compromised, both passwords must be changed immediately by the local system administrator or by contacting the system vendor if the system administrator does not have those capabilities.

It is imperative that all software used to access IPAWS, EAS, WEA or other messaging systems be maintained and kept updated when software updates are released to ensure that access, functionality, and security of alerting access is maintained.

System Security

Every system user is responsible for access security as it relates to their use of IPAWS/WEA messages and shall abide by these Rules of Behavior:



- All users must have a discrete user account ID for log-in which cannot be the user's social security number. To protect against unauthorized access, passwords and user ID are linked and used to identify and authenticate authorized users.
- Accounts and passwords shall not be transferred or shared. The sharing of both a user ID and associated password with anyone (including administrators) is prohibited.
- Accounts and passwords shall be protected from disclosure and writing passwords down or electronically storing them on a medium that is accessible by others is prohibited.
- Passwords must not contain names, repetitive patterns, dictionary words, product names, personal identifying information (e.g., birthdates, social security numbers, phone number), and must not be the same as the user ID.
- Passwords must be greater than eight (8) numbers, letters or characters.
- Passwords must be promptly changed whenever the compromise of a password is known or suspected.
- Users accessing IPAWS: Physically protect computing devices such as laptops, computer gaming consoles, smartphones etc.; protect sensitive data sent to or received from IPAWS; do not program computing devices with automatic sign-on sequences, passwords or access credentials when using IPAWS.
- Users will not provide or knowingly allow other individuals to use their account credentials to access IPAWS.
- To prevent and deter others from gaining unauthorized access to sensitive resources, users will log off or lock their computer workstation or will use a password-protected screensaver, whenever user steps away from a workstation area, even for a short time and will log off when leaving for the day.
- Inform the local system administrator when access to IPAWS is no longer required.
- Promptly report security incidents to the Local System Administrator and the State IPAWS Coordinator.
- All employees should receive cybersecurity awareness training and should follow cybersecurity best practices in protecting both IPAWS physical access equipment and network access.
- Only trained and certified users should be allowed access to the IPAWS software.

IPAWS Application Process

The State IPAWS Administrator approves applications for IPAWS Alerting Authorities within the state. Agencies desiring to obtain alerting authority must contact the State



IPAWS Administrator prior to purchasing any software or equipment. The State IPAWS Administrator ensures that adequate and proper alerting responsibilities are assigned. Copies of all documents referenced below are available from the State IPAWS Administrator.

How to apply for IPAWS:

1. Contact the State IPAWS Administrator for prior approval and guidance.
2. Select an IPAWS compatible software. Access to IPAWS is free, however, to send a message using IPAWS, an organization must procure its own IPAWS compatible software. A list of private sector developers Can be found at <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/practitioners/integrated-public-alert-warning-system/technology-developers>.
3. Apply for a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with FEMA at: <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/practitioners/integrated-public-alert-warning-system/public-safety-officials/sign-up>. To become a COG, a MOA governing system security must be executed between the sponsoring organization and FEMA. Each MOA is specifically tailored to the sponsoring organization and their interoperable software system.
4. The MOA will be sent as part of the FEMA applications process. The FEMA COG coordinator will prepare and return the MOA for signature after it is submitted and assign a COG identification (ID). After being signed by the applicant, the MOA will be routed for FEMA signatures. A copy of the executed MOA and the COG-specific digital certificate will be returned to the sponsoring organization. Both the COG ID and digital certificates (live and test) are necessary to configure the IPAWS compatible software system.
5. Complete IPAWS web-based training.
 - Complete IS-247.b - <https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-247.b>
 - Send the Certificate of Achievement to:
 - Louisiana Governor's Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Preparedness: Jake Chatfield, SWIC, jacob.chatfield@la.gov
6. Apply for public alerting permissions. You will receive a public alerting application along with your unsigned MOA. The designated state official must sign this application. The State IPAWS Administrator.
 - Complete this application defining the types of alerts a COG intends to issue and the extent of its geographic warning area. The contact information for the designated state reviewer will be provided with the public alerting application.
 - This form will be submitted for approval to:
 - Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness: Jake Chatfield, SWIC, jacob.chatfield@la.gov



LOUISIANA PUBLIC ALERTS, WARNINGS, AND NOTIFICATIONS PLAN JANUARY 2023

- Once the signed form is received, please send it to IPAWS@FEMA.DHS.GOV.



Acronyms

Acronym	Description
AMBER	America's Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response
CMSP	Commercial Mobile Service Provider
COG	Collaborative Operating Group
EAS	Emergency Alert System
FCC	Federal Communications Commission
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FIPS	Federal Information Processing System
FNF	Fixed Nuclear Facility
GOHSEP	Louisiana Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness
IC	Incident Commander
ID	Identification
IPAWS	Integrated Public Alert and Warning System
IS	Independent Study
LBA	Louisiana Broadcasters Association
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NWEM	Non-Weather Emergency Messaging
NWS	National Weather Service
PSAP	Public Safety Answering Point
PSHSB	FCC Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau
RMT	Required Monthly Test



LOUISIANA PUBLIC ALERTS, WARNINGS, AND NOTIFICATIONS PLAN JANUARY 2023

Acronym	Description
RWT	Required Weekly Test
SECC	State Emergency Communications Committee
SIEC	Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee
WEA	Wireless Emergency Alerts



Appendix 1 Template WEA Policy

Irrelevant warnings can fatigue the public rapidly and lead to recipients discounting further warning messages or opting out of receiving future alerts and warnings. Alert originators will make every effort, within the capabilities of the warning system(s), to limit the warning to people who are actually at risk. Warning systems become more effective to the extent they can target limited areas or specific at-risk populations.

Public Alert and Warning		
Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA)		
Created:	Author:	Approved:
System Use		
Authorized Use	Directives	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Activation of Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) through the Integrated Public Alerts and Warning System (IPAWS).A localized (local public alerting authority) short duration emergency incident that threatens lives, for which the public needs to take protective action(s) (Evacuate, shelter-in-place, etc.).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">All local WEA messages are coordinated through <i>(Name)</i> Parish Emergency Management.Local Emergency Management coordinates activation of IPAWS for qualifying incidents on behalf of public safety agencies with jurisdiction in <i>(Name)</i> Parish.Local Emergency Management coordinates with ancillary Public Alerting Authorities (PAA) in applicable areas (Military Bases, Universities, etc.)Local Emergency Management considers the following general guidelines for qualifying local activations of WEA:<ul style="list-style-type: none">Severity of situation – WEA messages will aid in reducing loss of life or substantial loss of property.Timeliness – Immediate public knowledge is required to avoid adverse impact.Alternatives – Other means of disseminating information are inadequate to ensure rapid delivery.	
Prohibited Use		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">AMBER Alert and Blue Alert messages must originate from a law enforcement or GOHSEP for broadcast.Weather-related messages are originated by the National Weather Service (NWS).Non-emergency (non-life threatening) information shall not be sent over IPAWS.		



Initial Focus & Recommended Actions		
Task #	Completed	Description
1		<p>Determine from the agency requesting a WEA message:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Source: <i>Who is issuing the warning</i>• Hazard Characteristics: <i>Information on the impending hazard</i>• Location: <i>Specific information regarding a geographic location</i>• Consequences: <i>What will happen to people if they do not act</i>• Protective Action: <i>What people need to do to get away from the danger</i>• Protective Action Time: <i>How much time people have to accomplish protective action(s)</i>• How action reduces consequences: <i>Acting will result in the following safety consequence</i>• Expiration Time: <i>When this message expires or is no longer valid</i>
2		<p>Responsible entity will prepare and send message in accordance with the above information. The message must be less than 360 characters, along with a 90-character message.</p>
3		<p>Any assistance for IPAWS message issuance should be processed through IPAWS Technical Support Services Facility or call, toll-free, 1-84-IPAWSLAB or 1-844-729-7522 24 hours a day, 7 days per week, including holidays.</p>
4		<p>If applicable, contact the National Weather Service to request activation of the NOAA weather radios.</p>
5		<p>WEA message should be followed up with general public information issued through agency public information officers (PIO) to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social media releases• Local media involvement (television, radio, etc.)
6		<p>If applicable, a follow-up message should be sent to update the situation or terminate an emergency.</p>



Hazards and Corresponding Public Alerting Method

Hazard	Event Code	Authorized By	Local Alerting (Opt-in)	IPAWS/WEA
Avalanche Warning	AVW	National Weather Service	Yes	Yes
Blue Alert	BLU	Louisiana State Police	No	Yes
Civil Unrest/Civil Danger	CDW	Law Enforcement, Emergency Management	Yes	Yes
Civil Emergency Message	CEM	On Scene Incident Command (IC), Local Municipalities, Emergency Management	Yes	Yes
Practice/Demo Warning	DMO	Emergency Management, Public Alerting Authority	Yes	Yes
Earthquake (post incident)	EQW	Local Municipalities, Emergency Management	Yes	Yes
Evacuation Immediate	EVI	On Scene Incident Command (IC), Local Municipalities, Emergency Management	Yes	Yes
Fire Warning	FRW	On Scene Incident Command (IC), Local Municipalities, Emergency Management	Yes	Yes
Hazardous Materials Warning	HMW	On Scene Incident Command (IC), Local Municipalities, Emergency Management	Yes	Yes
Local Area Emergency	LAE	On Scene Incident Command (IC), Local Municipalities, Emergency Management	Yes	Yes
Law Enforcement Warning	LEW	Louisiana State Police	No	Yes
Nuclear Power Plant Warning	NUW	Local Municipalities, Emergency Management	Yes	Yes
Radiological Hazard Warning	RHW	Local Municipalities, Emergency Management	Yes	Yes
Shelter in Place Warning	SPW	On Scene Incident Command (IC), Local Municipalities, Emergency Management	Yes	Yes



Hazards and Corresponding Public Alerting Method

Hazard	Event Code	Authorized By	Local Alerting (Opt-in)	IPAWS/WEA
9-1-1 Telephone Outage Emergency	TOE	Local Municipalities, Emergency Management	Yes	Yes
Severe Weather (Flooding, Tornado, Avalanche, etc.)		National Weather Service	No	No

Example Message:

“(Blank) Parish Emergency Management. Chlorine gas release at 700 Sandridge Rd (city/town). Toxic Cloud moving toward Madison Park. Breathing this gas will result in immediate death. Close doors and windows and turn of Air Conditioning. Drivers remain in vehicles. This must be completed in the next 10 minutes. This message will expire at XXXX am.”

“From: (Blank) Parish Emergency Management. Armed suspect at 700 Sandridge Rd (city/town). Stay indoors and secure all windows and doors, report all suspicious activity to 9-1-1. Tune into local media for more information.”

“From: (Blank) Parish Emergency Management. I-29 near mile marker 77 is currently closed due to flooding. Be patient. Do not call 9-1-1 unless you have an emergency, Keep the emergency lane open! Tune into local media for more information.”



Appendix 2 Louisiana EAS Plan

The most up-to-date Louisiana EAS Plan and EAS testing schedule can be found at:

<https://broadcasters.org/eas/>



Appendix 3 Louisiana Radiological Response Plan

The most up-to-date Louisiana Peacetime Radiological Response Plan (LPRRP) can be found at:

<https://www.deq.louisiana.gov/page/radiological-emergency-planning-and-response-repr>